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THE EARLY POPULARITY OF MILTON'S MINOR POEMS

L'Allegro and Il Penseroso, which are now universally known; but which, by a strange fatality, lay in a sort of obscurity, the private enjoyment of a few curious readers, till they were set to admirable music by Mr. Handel. And, indeed, this volume of Milton's Miscellaneous Poems has not till very lately met with suitable regard.—Joseph Warton, *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope* (1757), I, 38.

On this statement, echoed in 1785 by Thomas Warton in his edition of Milton's *Poems on several occasions*¹ and by Wordsworth in his "Essay supplementary to the Preface of 1802"—where the recognition of the poems is postponed to about 1785—literary history has been based. In spite of the able protests of William Godwin² against the statements of Thomas Warton, those statements have prevailed even in the work of recent students of Milton.³ It is important, however, to note that Todd, a friend of Warton's, expressed surprise "that Mr. Warton should have asserted that for seventy years after their first publication, he recollects no mention of these poems in the whole succession of English literature."⁴ Todd thereupon corrected some of the mistakes in Warton's facts and cited some bits of evidence to disprove neglect. Masson,⁵ though conservative in the matter, seems rather to agree with the views here to be stated. There is no doubt, of course, that throughout the eighteenth century "Paradise Lost" was much more popular than Milton's other poems; and there is no doubt that the middle of the eighteenth century saw a great outburst of imitation and praise of the "minor" poems. But an increased vogue does not necessarily imply previous neglect, and literary historians have commonly said that the minor poems were neglected for a hundred years after their first publication. A fairly extensive, if cursory,

¹ See pp. x-xii of the 2d ed. (1791), to which all my references here are made.

² Godwin's *Lives of Edward and John Philips* (1815), pp. 286 ff.

³ R. D. Havens in *Eng. Stud.*, XL, 175 ff., 187 ff.; J. W. Good, *Studies in the Milton Tradition* (1915), pp. 141-42; Dowden, *Proceedings of the British Academy* (1907-8), p. 291.

⁴ Todd's (2d) ed. of Milton's *Poetical Works* (1809), I, 61-62.

⁵ See his *Life of Milton*, VI, 775 ff.

reading of English prose and poetry of the century following the Restoration has led me to the belief that phrasal echoes as well as critical comments and multiplicity of editions indicate for the poems a widespread and high regard from the time of their first publication. We shall then study the vogue of these poems before 1740, by which approximate date the poems are commonly thought to have attained due recognition.

I

It may be proper first to examine the usual form in which these poems were printed. The customary view, I believe, is that they were printed as a necessary part of Milton's "Poetical Works," and rarely except as such. At first sight this seems an entirely just view. In the period under consideration were printed eighteen separate editions of "Paradise Lost," and the poem appeared also eleven times in editions classed by Dr. Good as "Poetical Works."¹ The more important of the minor poems, aside from these eleven inevitable printings, were issued, variously grouped, on an average of five times each when clearly independent of the "Poetical Works." The following table, imitatively based on Dr. Good's results,² may be of assistance:

¹ *Studies in the Milton Tradition*, p. 25.

² See *op. cit.*, chapter ii. "Comus" was in 1738 printed four times in the form Dalton gave it for stage performance. I have omitted these editions, anticipating an objection that they are not Milton. The table may be further explained by giving the dates of editions (except the 18 of "Paradise Lost"). Under A we have "Comus" in 1637 and 1638; "Lycidas" in 1638. Under B the dates are 1645, 1673; under C, 1695, 1698 (the 1731 ed., Dr. Good to the contrary, is in two volumes); under D, 1705, 1707, 1713, 1720, 1721, 1725, 1727, 1730, 1731; under E, 1695; under F, 1716 and 1727; under G, 1671, 1672, 1680, 1688.

The initials of the minor poems are used throughout this article to abbreviate the names.

How Printed	Paradise Lost	Paradise Regain'd	L'Allegro II Penseroso	Comus	Lycidás	Samson Agonistes
A. In separate editions	18	.....	.....	2	1	.....
B. <i>Poems on several occasions</i> . . . . .	.....	.....	2	2	2	.....
C. In <i>Poetical Works</i> (1 vol.)	2	2	2	2	2	2
D. In "Poetical Works" (2 vols.) (So called by Dr. Good)	9	9	9	9	9	9
E. <i>Paradise Regain'd</i> and minor poems . . . . .	.....	1	1	1	1	1
F. In Dryden's <i>Miscellany</i> . . . . .	.....	.....	2	.....	2	.....
G. <i>Paradise Regain'd</i> and <i>Samson</i> together . . . . .	.....	4	.....	.....	.....	4
Total editions before 1740	29	16	16	16	17	16

It is noteworthy that the one-volume and two-volume editions of the *Poetical Works* have been separated here. In 1695 "Paradise Regain'd," "Samson Agonistes," and the minor poems appeared as a volume, and beginning with 1705, according to Dr. Good, this combination became the second volume of the "Poetical Works," as he calls them. It is clear that in some editions—such as that of 1695—the minor poems are regarded as subordinated to the three major works, for the minor poems are printed in two columns, while the others are not; but when they are (with "Paradise Regain'd" and "Samson," to be sure) given a volume by themselves, they cease in part to depend on the greater epic. Their independence seems more plausible when it is noted that this "second" volume is sometimes—I have not seen all the editions—printed without any indication of the fact that it is part of the "Poetical Works." A specimen title-page runs:

Paradise Regain'd./ A POEM./ In Four BOOKS./ To which is added/ SAMSON AGONISTES./ AND/ POEMS upon several Occasions./ With a Tractate of Education./ The AUTHOR/ JOHN MILTON./ The FIFTH EDITION. Adorn'd with Cuts./ London: Printed for J. Tonson, at Shake/ spear's Head, over-against Catherine-/ Street in the Strand. 1713./

The only indication of relationship of this volume to any other is a gilt "2" on the back; the words "Poetical Works" are nowhere to be found in it. The "sixth" and "seventh" editions of these poems (1725 and 1730) lack even this "2," as do some of the 1752 edition edited by Newton. Unfortunately, other editions that I have seen have been recently rebound, but the title-pages indicate no connection between the two volumes. At least, then, the idea that the shorter pieces were printed only as pendants to "Paradise Lost" should be expressed with great caution. Indeed, the fact that Tonson printed these poems eight times between 1705 and 1730 in a volume by themselves shows undoubted commercial demand; for it is practically certain that the volumes were not made to be sold only in sets. Tonson also included three of the poems—probably the most popular three—in Dryden's *Miscellany* for 1716 and 1727. The only conclusion safely to be drawn from printing during this period is that these poems in one combination

or another were so frequently before the public that it would be strange if they were not read. It is interesting to see that during the years 1712 to 1732 "The Rape of the Lock"—admittedly one of the most popular poems of its day—was reprinted, separately or in combination with other pieces, about a dozen times. In the same period "L'Allegro," "Il Penseroso," and "Lycidas" were, considering all combinations, printed about nine times. In this case reprintings do not prove much perhaps; but certainly the steady reprinting tends to disprove neglect.¹

II

Preliminary to any presentation of "critical" comment on these poems during our period, it is necessary to remind the reader that—Milton entirely aside—the critics of the time seem to have showed no great acumen; that criticism proceeded almost entirely to the discussion of "the greater poetry" (epic, tragedy, ode)—about which it has said little of permanent value. All lyric poetry was neglected by critics: in this sense Milton's minor poems were neglected. But they were no more neglected by critics than were the smaller pieces of Cowley, Waller, and Dryden. It is, furthermore, necessary to remark that whenever the poems are mentioned by critics (with perhaps two or three exceptions) they are mentioned with very high praise.² The shining exception is Dryden,³ who in 1693 alleged

¹ I have based my account of these editions upon Dr. Good's very explicit work (*op. cit.*, pp. 24–43). As a matter of additional record, I may cite Professor Arber's *Term Catalogues* (1903–6), II, 525, for a reprint of "Lycidas" (1694) with a Latin version by W. Hog, which Dr. Good does not count as an English edition—and which I have not counted here. On the other hand, the Boston Public Library copy of Tonson's 1695 edition of Milton seems merely to bind in unsold copies of the 1688 print of "Paradise Regain'd" and "Samson Agonistes." Dr. Good counts these two editions, and I have followed him. Similarly I have neglected the fact, unnoted by him, that the 1721 edition of "Paradise Regain'd," etc., uses the 1713 print of "Samson Agonistes." Quite evidently Tonson reprinted only such poems by Milton as the public wished to buy. I am frank to confess that I have seen only the editions of Milton that may be seen at Harvard, at the Boston Public Library, and in the various libraries of Chicago.

² This is true for everything except "Paradise Regain'd." Those who say, as does Dr. Good (*op. cit.*, p. 34) among others, that the minor poems were "almost uniformly subordinated to the lesser epic" should note the fact that while the minor poems are mentioned practically always with praise, "Paradise Regain'd" is spoken of in quite another tone. See, for example, Edward Phillips' *Life of Milton* (1694), p. ix; R. Meadowcourt's *Critique on Milton's Paradise Regain'd* (1732), p. 3; John Jortin's *Remarks on Spenser's Poems* (1734), p. 171; J. Richardson's *Explanatory Notes and Remarks on Milton's Paradise Lost* (1734), p. xciv.

³ W. P. Ker, *Essays of John Dryden*, II, 30.

in his own breezy manner that the reason Milton used blank verse was "that rhyme was not his talent," and adduced as proof that the rhyme in Milton's early poems "is always constrained and forced, and comes hardly from him, at an age when the soul is most pliant, and the passion of love makes almost every man a rhymers, though not a poet." This opinion certainly indicates ignorance of the poems or unscrupulous argumentative practice—or probably both. William Benson, in his *Letters concerning Poetical Translations, and Virgil's and Milton's Arts of Verse, &c.* (1739), p. 61, quotes Dryden's remark approvingly; but Benson's rank as critic may be gauged by the fact that a main thesis of his *Letters* is that "the principal Advantage *Virgil* has over *Milton* is *Virgil's* Rhyme" (p. 8). These views, in any case, are highly exceptional. If we examine the notices of the poems to be found in biographies, essays, letters, and eulogistic poems, we shall see a considerable number of passages expressing high commendation. Because any attempt at "organization" of this material would be artificial, and because there is obvious advantage in seeing the historical cumulation of references to the poems, these exceedingly miscellaneous bits of evidence will be chronologically listed.

1637. Sir Henry Wootton's letter commendatory of "Comus" certainly started Milton criticism with superlative praise. Even if, with Thomas Warton, we discount the tribute as due in part to friendship, we still see the evident delight of the writer glow forth. The letter is usually reprinted with "Comus."

1637. Lawes, H. In the dedication prefixed to the first edition of "Comus" Lawes informs Viscount Brackley "that the often copying of it hath tired my pen to give my several friends satisfaction, and brought me to a necessity of producing it to the public view."¹

1645. Moseley, Humphrey. Moseley, the printer of the poems, prefixed to the 1645 edition some remarks addressed "To the Reader" which seem significant. In part they read:

The Author's more peculiar excellency in these studies was too well known to conceal his Papers, or to keep me from attempting to solicit them from him. Let the event guide itself which way it will, I shall deserve

¹ Quoted from the Clarendon Press ed. (1906), I, 46.

of the age by bringing into the light as true a birth as the Muses have brought forth since our famous SPENSER wrote; whose Poems in these English ones are as rarely imitated as sweetly excelled.¹

After a great deal of this has been credited to the eternal advertising tendency, it remains true that since Moseley was publisher for many poets, he could not afford to waste fond superlatives on poems that were not assured a success even before publication. To these early tributes by Wootton, Lawes, and Moseley might be added the flattering compliments paid the young poet by his Italian friends, but since we are primarily concerned with his English reputation, those are here omitted.²

Ca. 1648. Archbishop Sancroft thought highly enough of the "Nativity Ode" and the version of the "Fifty-third Psalm" to copy them from "John Milton's poems." Thomas Warton regarded this act as "perhaps almost the only instance on record, in that period of time [1645-1715], of their having received any, even a slight, mark of attention or notice."³ The statement is a fair sample of the lack of investigation upon which the Wartons based their theory of neglect.

1655. Cotgrave, John. *The English Treasury of Wit and Language*. Thomas Warton (*op. cit.*, p. vii) regards omission of the minor poems from this work as evidence of neglect, but Godwin calls attention to the fact that Cotgrave drew only from dramatic poets.⁴ Omission of "Comus" in such a case becomes regrettable but comprehensible.

1657. Poole, Joshua. *The English Parnassus: or a helpe to English Poesie*. In citing this as one of the books in which not "the quantity of a hemistich" of Milton is quoted, Warton made one of the worst blunders of his career. Godwin is quite right in saying that the "Poems on Several Occasions, published twelve years before, appear to be cited as often as the writings of almost any other author"—which means as often as the greatest Elizabethans are cited. Godwin quotes Todd as saying "there are few

¹ See Todd's ed. (1809), I, 61; the Everyman Library ed., p. 375; or almost any good edition for this letter.

² For this Italian reputation see Masson's *Life*, I, chap. viii, *passim*.

³ See Thomas Warton's ed. of Milton's *Poems upon several occasions*, 1791 (his 2d ed.), p. v.

⁴ *Lives of Edward and John Philips* (1815), p. 286.

pages in which quotations may not be found from Milton's poetry."

1660. Saumaise, Claude. *Claudii Salmasii ad Johannem Miltonum Responsio*. On page 5 of this work Saumaise jeers at Milton's false quantities in his Latin poems, and adds sarcastically:

Tametsi aetatem illis, qua scripta sunt, non apposuisset, facile tamen perspicere poteramus pueri esse poemata. Sed puerilia errata praestare debet jam vir, cum & paucos abhinc annos recudi Londini curaverit. Si stylus hic ejus semper fuisset, & amoribus cantandis aut naeniis mortualibus plorandis tempus tantum impendisset, pessimum poetarum longe anteferrem optimo patronorum, qui pessimam causam tueretur.

This is not evidence of high regard, but I think it does argue the poems known in 1660. It begot later criticism. (See 1695, Morhof.)

1669. Phillips, Edward. *Joannis Buchleri Sacrarum Profanarumque Phrasium Poeticarum Thesaurus* (17th edition). Appended to this work was a section entitled *Tractatulus de Carmine Dramatico Poetarum Veterum, cui subjungitur Compendiosa Enumeratio Poetarum Recentiorum*, in which was included the first printed praise of "Paradise Lost." Although the work, like so many others of the time, is almost literally an enumeration, the minor poems get brief mention:

Joannes Miltonius, praeter alia quae scripsit elegantissima, tum Anglicè, tum Latinè, nuper publici juris fecit *Paradisum Amissum*, Poema, quod, sive sublimitatem argumenti, sive leporem simul et majestatem styli, sive sublimitatem inventionis, sive similitudines et descriptiones quam maximè naturales, respicamus, verè Heroicum, ni fallor, audiet: plurimum enim suffragiis qui non nesciunt judicare, censetur perfectionem hujus generis poematis assecutum esse.¹

Thomas Warton bars this testimony as coming from a relative. The superlative applied to the minor poems is typical.

1675. Phillips, Edward. *Theatrum Poetarum*, pp. 113-14:

John Milton, the Author (not to mention his other works, both in Latin and English, both in strict and solute Oration, by which his Fame is sufficiently known to all the Learned of Europe) of two Heroic Poems, and a Tragedy; namely *Paradise lost*, *Paradise Regain'd*, and *Samson Agonista*

¹ This passage is quoted from Godwin's *Lives* (1815) of Milton's two nephews, p. 145, note.

[sic]; in which how far he hath reviv'd the Majesty and true *Decorum* of Heroic Poesy and Tragedy: it will better become a person less related then myself, to deliver this judgement.

This affirmation of an international reputation for the early poems is valuable evidence against the theory of neglect.¹

Ca. 1681? Aubrey, John. *Brief Lives* (Oxford, 1898), II, 60–72. Aubrey's notes, concerned with biographical fact rather than criticism, mention the friendship with Diodati as reflected in the poems, and call attention to Milton's precocity by saying of the "Poems": "Some writt but at 18."

— Undated letters between Waller and St. Evremond afford invaluable evidence. Dr. Good dates the letters about 1673 "or later" (*op. cit.*, p. 141). Waller writes:

There is one *John Milton*, an old commonwealth's man, who hath in the latter part of his life, written a poem intituled *Paradise Lost*; and to say the truth, it is not without some fancy and bold invention. But I am much better pleased with some smaller productions of his in the scenical and pastoral way; one of which called *Lycidas* I shall forthwith send you, that you may have some amends for the trouble of reading this bad poetry. [He had enclosed verses of his own.]

And St. Evremond replies:

The poem called *Lycidas*, which you say is written by Mr. *Milton*, has given me much pleasure. It has in it what I conceive to be the true spirit of pastoral poetry, the old Arcadian enthusiasm. . . . What pleases me in *John Milton's* poem, besides the true pastoral enthusiasm and the scenical merit, is the various and easy flow of its numbers. Those measures are well adapted to the tender kind of imagery, though they are not expressive of the first strong impressions of grief.²

1687. Winstanley, William. *The lives of the most Famous English Poets*. Here we have one long sentence devoted to Milton in which Winstanley copies the misspelling of Milton's three major titles from the *Theatrum Poetarum*, without mentioning the minor poems at all. Phillips' sentence about Milton's fame as based on other works than these three roused all Winstanley's political antagonism.

¹ An ambiguity in Phillips' further praise of Milton's heroic poems on page 114 (under John Phillips) has amusingly misled the unintelligent Winstanley in his *Lives* (1687), p. 210—and also the *D.N.B.* (see John Phillips).

² These quotations are from *Letters supposed to have passed between M. de St. Evremond and Mr. Waller* (1809), pp. 133–38.

onism and he exclaims: "But his Fame is gone out like a Candle in a snuff, and his Memory will always stink, which might have ever lived in honourable Repute, had he not been a notorious Traytor."

1687. Ayres, Philip. *Lyric Poems*. In the Preface to this volume the writer defends "sonnets, canzons, madrigals, &c."—of which, either original or translated, his volume largely consists—saying:

For many eminent Persons have published several things of this nature, and in this method, both Translations and Poems of their own; As the famous Mr. *Spencer*, Sir *Philip Sidney*, Sir *Richard Fanshaw*, Mr. *Milton*, and some few others; The success of all which, in these things, I must needs say, cannot much be boasted of; and tho' I have little reason after it, to expect Credit from these my slight Miscellanies, yet has it not discouraged me from adventuring on what my Genius prompted me to.

This passage obviously is a complaint that lyric poetry (especially sonnets, he probably meant) in general is neglected. Milton as a lyricist is mentioned apparently with Ayres' favorites.

1688. Morhof, Daniel George. *Polyhistor sive notitia auctorum et rerum commentarii*. I have not seen this edition, but that of 1695 (the second), after a defense of Milton's Latin prose as compared with that of Saumaise, remarks:

Quicquid tamen ejus sit, ostendunt Miltoni scripta virum vel in ipsâ juventute: quae enim ille adolescens scripsit carmina Latina, unâ cum Anglicis edita, aetatem illam longè superant, quâ ille vir scripsit poemata Anglica sed sine rhythmis, quos ut pestes carminum vernaculorum abesse volebat, quale illud 12. libris constans *the paradise lost*. Plena ingenii & acuminis sunt, sed insuavia tamen videntur ob rhythmî defectum, quem ego abesse à tali carminum genere non posse existimo, quicquid etiam illi, & Italis nonnullis, & nuper Isaaco Vossio in libro poematum cantu, videatur.¹

The first part of this is amusing as a reply to Saumaise (*vide supra*), and the last part as a reaction to blank verse. There may be lack of judgment but there is no lack of praise with regard to the lesser poems. See 1660 and also 1732.

1691. Langbaine, Gerard. *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets*. Milton is treated on pages 375-77. A page and a half are

¹ Liber I, cap. xxiv, pp. 304-5.

devoted to "Samson," mainly to its versification, and to "Comus." For "Comus" considerable title-page information is given. The other poems are merely listed; the "Poems in Latin and English" are dated 1645; Langbaine is ignorant of the date of "Paradise Lost." Thomas Warton (*op. cit.*, p. vi) has misrepresented these facts.

1691. Wood, Anthony. *Athenae Oxonienses*. This work, again, neglects the poetical genius of Milton, but does not neglect the minor poems more than the greater poems. The various poetical volumes are dutifully listed, and in column 880 it is said: "By his indefatigable study he profited exceedingly, wrote then several Poems, paraphras'd some of *David's Psalms*, performed the collegiate and academical exercise to the admiration of all, and was esteemed to be a virtuous and sober person, yet not to be ignorant of his own parts." In column 883 after listing the "Poems, &c. on several occasions" as published in 1673-4, he adds: "Among these are mix'd some of his Poems before mention'd, made in his youthful years." In column 884: "To conclude, he was more admired abroad, and by Foreigners, than at home; and was much visited by them when he liv'd in *Petty France*, some of whom have out of pure devotion gone to *Breadstreet* to see the House and Chamber where he was born, &c." This last shows that Phillips' statement about a continental reputation was not mere family pride. Probably his Latin and Italian poems had by 1690 aided his reputation throughout Europe more than had "Paradise Lost." At least Anthony Wood did not regard Milton as a poet of one poem.

1692. *The Athenian Mercury*, 16 January, 1691-2 (Vol. V, No. 14), prints an interesting discussion, "Whether Milton and Waller were not the best English Poets? and which the better of the two?" The poets are said to be "both excellent in their kind"; but Milton's merits are given the more attention. "Paradise Lost" and "Samson" receive most space, but the critic concludes his specification of merits by saying, "In his Juvenile Poems, those on Mirth and Melancholly, an Elegy on his Friend that was drown'd, and especially a Fragment of the Passion, are incomparable."

"Incomparable" is a word worth emphasizing. It is hard to see that the critic here is any less enthusiastic over the minor poems

than over "Paradise Lost" or "Samson," which naturally receive more space.¹

1692. [Gildon, Charles]. *Miscellany Poems upon Several Occasions*. Pages 29–33 print "Julii Mazarini, Cardinalis, Epitaphium: Authore Joh. Milton." This inclusion illustrates the interest of the time in anything signed John Milton.

1694. Phillips, Edward. *Life of Milton*. Prefixed to *Letters of State, Written by Mr. John Milton*. In this *Life* Phillips attends to biographical fact and neglects literary criticism. The "Nativity Ode," "L'Allegro," "Il Penseroso," and "Comus" are unmentioned. "The Vacation Exercise" and "Lycidas" as growing out of Milton's college experience are mentioned. Of the latter it is said: "Never was the loss of Friend so Elegantly lamented; and among the rest of his Juvenile Poems, some he wrote at the Age of 15, which contain a Poetical Genius scarce to be parallel'd by any *English Writer*" (p. ix).

1694. Hog, William. In the *Term Catalogues* (ed. Arber, II, 525) the following is listed for November, 1694: "Two poems (the one whereof was pen'd by *Clievland*; and the other by *Milton*) upon the death of a worthy and learned young gentleman, Mr. *Ed. King*, who was drown'd in the Irish Seas. To which is added, a Latin Paraphrase on both; which was pen'd by *W. H. Quarto*." See under 1690 and 1698.

1696. Gildon, Charles, editor. *Chorus Poetarum; or poems on Several Occasions*, etc. (For this date see the *Term Catalogues* [ed. Arber], II, 590. The title-page has the combination MDCLXIXIV.) Here Gildon prints (p. 19) "To Christina Queen of Sweden by Mr. Marvel." These lines have also been ascribed to Milton. Todd, in his edition of Milton (1809, I, 209), says of these verses to Christina: "They are ascribed to Fleetwood Shephard in a worthless book, entitled *Chorus Poetarum*, 8vo. 1684."

1697. Bayle, Pierre. *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, II, 590. Here in a footnote Bayle treats of Milton's poetry. He devotes more space to the minor poems than to "Paradise Lost," but merely summarizes the remarks of Saumaise and gives dates for the Latin poems and the 1645 volume. See 1702.

¹ See Dr. Good, *op. cit.*, p. 142. I owe this reference and some others to the kindness of Professor R. S. Crane of Northwestern University. Sir Thomas Pope Blount, *De Re Poetica*, pp. 137–38, soon reprinted the entire passage without comment.

1698. Hog, William. *Comoedia Joannis Miltoni, viri clarissimi, (quae agebatur in Arce Ludensi,) paraphrasticè reddita, à Gulielmo Hogaeo.* So listed by Todd, *Milton's Works* (1809), I, 202. I have not seen the book. The preface should contain material valuable for this study.

1698. Toland, John. *A Complete Collection of the Historical, Political, and Miscellaneous Works of John Milton In Three Volumes. To which is Prefix'd The Life of the Author.* The *Life* which Toland here printed is filled with the highest enthusiasm for all Milton's works. This Warton explains away as due to the influence of Edward Phillips. The praise, however, has a glow of sincerity that casts doubt upon Warton's notion. Only a few passages can be quoted. From page 7:

He wrote another Latin Elegy to CHARLES DEODATI; and in his twentieth year he made one on the approach of the Spring: but the following year he describes his falling in love with a Lady (whom he accidentally met, and never afterwards saw) in such tender Expressions, with those lively Passions and Images so natural, that you would think Love himself had directed his pen, or inspir'd your own Breast when you peruse them.

From page 10:

Our Author in mournful Notes bitterly laments the immature fate of this young Gentleman, whom he denotes by the appellation of *Damon* in an Eclog nothing inferior to the *Maronian Daphnis*, and which is to be still seen among his Latin Miscellanies.

From page 16:

Thus far our Author, who afterwards made this Character good in his inimitable Poem of *Paradise Lost*; and before this time in his *Comus* or Mask presented at *Ludlow Castle*, like which Piece in the peculiar disposition of the Story, the sweetness of the Numbers, the justness of the Expression, and the Moral it teaches, there is nothing extant in any Language.

Later, page 44, Toland says:

Our Author's Juvenil and Occasional Poems, both in *English* and *Latin*, were printed in one small volume. I took notice of the best of 'em in many places of this Discourse; but the Monody wherein he bewails his Learned Friend Mr. King drown'd in the *Irish* seas, is one of the finest he ever wrote.

On pages 20, 24, and 35 of his *Life*, Toland quotes sonnets by Milton, four of which he notes as "never printed with his other poems."

Aside from these sonnets no poems are in any way treated as if Toland thought himself their "discoverer" or as if he thought himself dealing with poems that had ever suffered neglect. It is astonishing that anyone who has read his *Life* attentively should think the poems were disregarded in Toland's day.

1699. Gildon, Charles. *Lives and Characters of the English Dramatic Poets*. This reworking of Langbaine (1691) dwells naturally upon Milton's two dramatic pieces. Gildon mentions the indebtedness of Dryden's "Aureng-zebe" to "Samson" and cites sources for "Samson" itself. He gives brief facts regarding the presentation and printing of "Comus."

1702. Bayle, Pierre. *Dictionnaire historique et critique*. In this edition of his work Bayle adds material on Milton (see pp. 2112-18) from Toland's *Life*. This material deals with the poet's college experience and his Latin and Italian poems, which are mentioned with vague commendation. The surprising thing is that in the shuffle of revision Bayle drops all mention of Milton's major works—an omission notable in later editions of the *Dictionnaire*.¹

1705. *A Complete History of Europe, from the Year 1600 to the Treaty of Nimeguen*. Godwin (*op. cit.*, pp. 296-97) quotes this work, from the year 1674:

There is hardly anything that can make this year more remarkable than the death of the famous John Milton. . . . He has left us an inimitable poem in blank verse, called *Paradice Lost*; as also *Paradice Regain'd*, *Sampson Agonistes*, and *Occasional Poems*.

Although here the interest, being historical, is all in Milton's opinions, the mention is quotable as characteristic, and also because Edward Phillips, whom Warton thought ever ready to praise his slighted uncle, does not mention Milton's death in his continuation of Baker's chronicle—at least there is no mention in the 1730 edition.

1705. Sir William Trumbull, a retired Secretary of State, on October 19 returned to his young friend Alexander Pope a borrowed copy of the minor poems, writing as follows:

I expected to find, what I have met with, an admirable genius in those poems, not only because they were Milton's, or were approved by Sir Henry

¹ On Birch's (1738) revision of Bayle's unsatisfactory account of Milton see Dr. Good, *op. cit.*, p. 125, notes.

Wotton, but because you had commended them; and give me leave to tell you, that I know nobody so like to equal him, even at the age he wrote most of them, as yourself. [From the Elwin-Courthope ed. of Pope's *Works*, VI, 2.]

This is important as discrediting the ungenerous story by Thomas Warton to the effect that Pope "pilfered from COMUS and the PENSEROSO" epithets and phrases for "Eloisa to Abelard," "conscious, that he might borrow from a book then scarcely remembered, without the hazard of a discovery, or the imputation of plagiarism" (*op. cit.*, pp. x, xi). Warton's further story that his father was instrumental in bringing these poems to Pope's attention about 1717 is discredited by Trumbull's letter as well as by Pope's early poems, which are saturated with the youthful work of Milton. "Then scarcely remembered" is an absurd phrase to apply to anything written by Milton, with "then" referring to 1717.¹

1709. *Tatler* No. 98 (Steele, November 24, uses "Comus" as an example of the effectiveness of moral poetry.

1711-12. *The Spectator*. In No. 249 (December 15, 1711) Addison quotes with praise the passage on Laughter from "L'Allegro" (lines 11-32). In No. 425 (July 8, 1712), lines 61-72 and 147-154 of "Il Penseroso" are quoted, ostensibly from memory. One or two slight misquotations make this seem actually what is being done. "Comus the God of Revels" is mentioned in this paper. One would certainly expect more quotations from these poems in the *Spectator*, but on the other hand, outside the papers on "Paradise Lost" not a great deal of standard English poetry is quoted; attention is rather given to new poems.

1715. Hughes, John. *An Essay on Allegorical Poetry*, etc. (See W. H. Durham, *Critical Essays* [1700-1725], pp. 86-104, especially p. 93.) Here we find quoted with admiration lines 109-20 of "Il Penseroso." In the same essay, speaking of the story of Circe, Hughes remarks: "There is another Copy of the *Circe*, in a Mask, by our famous *Milton*; the whole Plan of which is Allegorical, and it is written with a very Poetical Spirit on the same Moral, tho with different Characters" (*ibid.*, p. 94).

¹ On Pope's indebtedness to Milton see the excellent article by Mary Stuart Leather in *Eng. Stud.*, XXV, 400.

1716. *Dryden's Miscellany*. "The First part of Miscellany Poems. Containing Variety of New Translations of the ancient poets: Together with Several original poems. By the Most Eminent Hands. Publish'd by Mr. Dryden The Fourth Edition." Here, at the reputed suggestion of Fenton, were included "L'Allegro," "Il Penseroso," and "Lycidas." They were reprinted in the fifth edition of this volume (1727).

1718. Gildon, Charles. *The Complete Art of Poetry*. This work, as Warton has said, strangely neglects Milton. Gildon seems to have been more interested in "Samson" than in Milton's other poems,¹ though he apparently realized the value already attached to anything by Milton.²

1719-21. Dennis, John. *Original Letters*, 1721. Under date of 1719 Dennis (see pp. 79-80), after quoting the epigram of Selvaggi and the verses of "Salsiki" (*sic!*), and mentioning the intimacy with Manso, says: "Thus, you see, the *Italians*, by his juvenile Essays, discover'd the great and growing Genius of *Milton*, whereas his Countrymen knew very little of him, even thirty Years after he had publish'd among them the noblest Poem in the World." Dennis' mistaken idea that "Paradise Lost" was recognized with shameful tardiness was very likely the father of the Warton notion about the minor poems. Few critics now would subscribe to Dennis' view.

1721. Dennis, John. *Original Letters*. In an undated letter, written "about sixteen years ago" and now printed, Dennis makes ironical retort to Collier's "Letter: Containing a Defense of a Regulated Stage." He says:

To King James succeeded King Charles the First; and then arose another famous Reformer, *John Milton* by Name, who not only left a Tragedy behind him, the Story of which he impiously borrow'd from the Bible, written, to leave him without Excuse, in his mature, nay declining Years, but has left a fine Encomium on Shakespear; has shewn an extraordinary Esteem for *Johnson*; and among all the Things that he thought fit to reform, so far had Prejudice laid hold of his Understanding, it never so much as came into his Head that the Stage was one of them [pp. 225-29].

¹ See *The Complete Art of Poetry*, p. 302; *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear*, Volume the Seventh (published with Rowe's ed., 1710), p. lvii; *The Post-Man Robb'd of his Mail* (1719), p. 243; and see Gildon's reworking of Langbaine, here cited under 1699.

² See under the years 1692 and 1696.

On pages 78–79, as Thomas Warton points out, Dennis quotes from the Latin poems as used in Toland's *Life*.

1723. Burchet, J. "To Allan Ramsay on his *Richy and Sandy*." Printed in the *Poems* of Allan Ramsay (1723), p. 170. Though ambiguous the following lines seem a tribute to Milton's pastoral poems:

Nor dost thou, *Ramsay*, sightless Milton wrong
By ought contain'd in thy melodious Song;
For none but *Addy* could his Thoughts sublime
So well unriddle or his mystick Rhime.
And when he deign'd to let his Fancy rove
Where Sun-burnt Shepherds to the Nymphs make Love,
No one e'er told in softer Notes the Tales
Of rural Pleasures in the spangled Vales.¹

1724. Jacob, Giles. *The Poetical Register; or, the Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick Poets*. Pages 183–84 condense the material on Milton furnished by Langbaine's *Lives*, but add Dryden's epigram. In his *Historical Account of the Lives and Writings of the English Poets*, reprinted in this same year, Jacob devotes pages 100–106 to Milton. The literary criticism is taken almost verbatim from Toland's remarks on the precocity of Milton's college poems (which in turn had echoed Morhof), and also from the *Athenian Mercury* passage of 1692 which had pronounced the minor poems "incomparable." (These two volumes by Jacob were printed earlier than 1724 [1719, 1720], but I have not seen the first editions.)

1725. Fenton, Elijah. *Life* of Milton prefixed to the 1725 edition of the *Works*. (I quote from an 1829 reprint.) Fenton praises the minor poems very highly. He finds "the Mask of Comus, L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, and Lycidas, all in such an exquisite strain, that, though he had left no other monuments of his genius behind him, his name had been immortal."

1727. Theobald, Lewis, editor. *The Works of Shakespeare*. In the Preface to Volume I, while commenting on the opening of "Twelfth Night," Theobald remarks: "The general beauties of those two poems of MILTON, intituled, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, are obvious to all readers, because the descriptions are the most

¹ Is this the passage referred to by Dr. Good, p. 141, n. 8? I have not seen the 1731 ed. of Ramsay.

poetical in the world."¹ He proceeds to show that these two poems with much art use the same images but excite opposite emotions by the different moods in which the images are presented.

1730. Mareuil. *Le Paradis reconquis, traduit de l'Anglois de Milton; avec quelques autres Pieces de Poësies*. "The four Pieces," remarks Birch (*Life of Milton*, pp. lv-lvi), "which the Translator has added, are *Lycidas*, *Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, and the *Ode on Christ's Nativity*."

Translation in quantity is very much more likely to result from a general fame of the works than from a personal partiality for them.

1730. Fenton, Elijah. *Observations on some of Mr. Waller's Poems*. On page c, in commenting on Waller's lines "To Mr. Henry Lawes," Fenton quotes Milton's sonnet to Lawes.

1731. Rowe, Elizabeth Singer. *Letters moral and entertaining*, Part II. That the minor poems were even by 1731 dear to the soft sentimentalists may be seen by the following: "As I was sitting in a summerhouse, my usual retreat in an afternoon, reading Milton's *Elegy on Lycidas*, a downy slumber closed my eyes, and sunk my sorrows in the pleasing oblivion" (quoted from Mrs. Rowe's *Works* [1796], I, 240).

1732. Bentley, Richard, editor. *Paradise Lost*. In this notorious edition Bentley uses the minor poems only once for illustrative material. He cites on page 2 "Comus," lines 43-44. This is doubtless to be classified as "neglect" of the minor poems.

1732. Pearce, Zachary. *Review of the Text of Milton's Paradise Lost*. Thomas Warton (p. xi) says that in this book the minor poems "frequently furnish collateral evidences in favour of the established text; and in the refutation of Bentley's chimerical corrections."

1732. Morhof, Daniel George. *Polyhistor Literarius* (3d ed.). From Tomus I, Liber VII, cap. iii ("De Poëtis Recentioribus"), p. 1070: "Recensuimus praecipuos Poëtarum Latinorum. . . . Ab Anglis commendari *Joh. Miltonus*, ut in Anglicis, ita in Latinis poëmatibus, solet." Here, as in practically all the encyclopedic

¹ On this passage see Warburton's letter to Birch (1737) in Nichols' *Literary History*, II, 81.

mentions of Milton from the very start, we find admiration of his lesser poetry taken for granted.

1734. Richardson, J. *Explanatory Notes and Remarks on Milton's Paradise Lost. By J. Richardson, Father and Son, With a LIFE of the Author, and a Discourse on the Poem. By J. R. Sen.* It is impossible to quote all the enthusiastic praise the minor poems receive in this volume. "For their Dignity and Excellence they are sufficient to have set him among the most Celebrated of the Poets, even of the Ancients themselves; his *Mask* and *Lycidas* are perhaps Superior to all in their Several Kinds" (p. xv). Richardson has heard "*Lycidas*" placed above Theocritus. As explanatory material, or notes, for "*Paradise Lost*," passages are cited from other works the following number of times: from "*Paradise Regain'd*," 7; "*Comus*," 4; "*Il Penseroso*," 2; Sonnets, 2; one each from "*L'Allegro*," "*Lycidas*," and "*Samson*." Ten citations are from the Latin poems and seven from the prose works. Shakespeare is cited eleven times; Spenser, ten; Chaucer, two; and Cowley and Crashaw, once each. I note no citations from other English poets.

1734. Jortin, John. *Remarks on Spenser's Poems.* Pages 171-86 of this slight volume are devoted to "*Paradise Lost*," "*Paradise Regain'd*," and "*Samson*." The book consists mainly of quotations, with a bit of comment. Except for quoting two lines of "*Lycidas*" (p. 185), Jortin neglects the poems that interest us.

1734. In this year Warburton and Theobald were in correspondence annotating passages of the minor poems. See John Nichols' *Illustrations*, II, 634, 648. Annotation usually follows rather than precedes popularity.

1735. Duncombe, William. *Poems by John Hughes, with some select essays.* In his prefatory account of Hughes' life Duncombe quotes "*Lycidas*," lines 70-86, with application to Hughes.

1737. Warburton, writing to Birch in this year, remarks (Nichols' *Illustrations*, II, 79) of Milton: "He is the author of three perfect pieces of Poetry. His '*Paradise Lost*,' '*Samson Agonistes*,' and '*Masque at Ludlow Castle*.'" And again he says (*ibid.*, p. 81): "The '*L'Allegro*' and '*Il Penseroso*' are certainly masterpieces in their kind."

1738. Hayward, Thomas. *The British Muse, or, A Collection of Thoughts Moral, Natural, and Sublime, of our English Poets.* The Preface (by William Oldys) says on page xx: "In his choice of authors, he (i.e., the collector) has not used the noted poets of later date, as *Milton, Cowley, Waller, Dryden, Otway, Lee, Prior, Congreve*, and such of their successors as adorn our own times; he has chosen rather to devote himself to neglected and expiring merit." Nevertheless Thomas Warton (p. vii) adds this work to the list of anthologies that unreasonably neglect the minor poems. One need only quote Godwin (*op. cit.*, p. 287), who finds this omission by Hayward "no way extraordinary. . . . Hayward was far from suspecting what Warton has discovered, that Milton, either his larger, or his smaller poems, was a hidden treasure, or that his excellencies were among such as 'time and oblivion were on the point of cancelling.'" Of the five anthologies cited by Warton as his major proof of the neglect of the poems under consideration, it must now be evident that only two—those by Bysshe and Gildon—could properly have been mentioned.

1738. Birch, Thomas. A *Life of Milton* by Birch was prefixed to his edition of the *Complete Prose Works* in this year. In this *Life* Birch pays much attention to the minor poems and gives them high praise. His point of view is scholarly as well as appreciative, for he gives many facts about the poems and even collates the manuscripts of some to improve the text. This is the sort of work that is done on poems already popular—not the sort that would increase the general popularity of the poems.

1740. Peck, Francis. *New Memoirs of the Life and Poetical Works of Mr. John Milton.* This curious work seems to be a printing of notes and "commonplace-book" remarks that Peck had been accumulating (see p. 84 for evidence of accumulative writing). Much space and praise are awarded the minor poems, which receive annotation in pages 132-70. The epics are dealt with in pages 171-211.

In completing this section of our evidence it may be well to observe that in Theobald, Warburton, Birch, and Peck we have a strongly developed tendency to treat the poems not primarily as

subjects of eulogy—though these commentators all praise highly—but as matter for historical study. Earlier we have seen the poems meet most astonishing recognition in 1657 from Poole, and we have seen them as objects of enthusiasm in the criticism of Edward Phillips, the *Athenian Mercury*, Toland, and Fenton. Both these strains of appreciation are evidence of a popularity which in the late thirties of the eighteenth century resulted in the poems' being used with musical settings. In 1738 Dr. Arne wrote music for the Rev. John Dalton's version of "Comus"; in 1739 Charles Jennens made an arrangement of "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso"—adding a third section, "Il Moderato"—which Handel set to music. This music, according to Joseph Warton, was what rescued the poems from obscurity! In 1742 Handel made an oratorio out of "Samson," and there were later less eminent attempts on "Paradise Lost" and "Lycidas." If the passages quoted in the preceding pages indicate anything, they seem to indicate that Joseph Warton was mistaken in thinking these musical settings a cause instead of a result of popularity.

It is true that there are a few volumes in which we should expect to find Milton's minor poems praised, or at least mentioned, but in which the authors are quite silent about them. These volumes, however, are rare—much rarer than Thomas Warton apparently thought them. And when criticized—except by Saumaise and Dryden—the minor poems are always commended, usually with superlative praise. The case might rest here; but since the litterateurs of this period were fully as imitative as they were critical, it may be worth while to note some of the many borrowings from the minor poems before 1740.

GEORGE SHERBURN

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

[To be concluded]